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SUBJECT: COMMUNIST PARTY LOOKS FOR GAINS FOLLOWING ZUMA WIN

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Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) The South African Communist Party (SACP), whose membership totals have slowly eroded in recent years, is looking to rebound following African National Congress (ANC) President Jacob Zuma's selection as the country's next ruler. SACP members can belong both to the ANC and to the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) so it is difficult to identify SACP loyalties. Eighty SACP members served in the National Assembly following the 2004 election and former President Thabo Mbeki had SACP members within his Cabinet. SACP expects its influence and access to grow under the Zuma administration, and some signs suggest that this will happen. The question will be whether they will use that access and influence successfully to pursue SACP policy goals. End Summary.

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The South African Communist Party Today  
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¶2. (SBU) The SACP has been a close ally of the ANC since the mid-20th century and provides its ideological framework -- and some of its personnel -- to the ruling party. The SACP, like the ANC, regards itself as the vanguard of the working class and still espouses Marxist and Leninist theories to underpin its vision of governance for South Africa. Even though the party claims to have roughly 40,000 members, it is more likely that the number stands closer to 12,000-15,000. The party historically has been the intellectual home of communist leaders such as Joe Slovo and Chris Hani. The party claims its medium term vision is to secure "working class hegemony" in the state and in all other centers of power. The party over the longer term seeks to pave the way for the establishment of a socialist state for "the permanent socialist revolution." The SACP has not made any secret of the fact that it wants to secure its visions by gaining increased influence over the Zuma-led ANC.

¶3. (SBU) The desire for greater influence over ANC policies emerges partly because of the marginalization the SACP faced under Mbeki. Although a former SACP member himself, Mbeki fell out with the SACP leadership during the late 1980s. He left the organization (along with Zuma) during the fallout and devoted his energy to negotiation with the apartheid government and to building ANC structures in the country. During his years as Deputy President and then President,

Mbeki and the SACP grew further apart and tension mounted as Mbeki increasingly espoused a market-oriented economic structure. Despite harsh public criticism from both SACP and COSATU, Mbeki maintained his economic approach throughout his presidency and his recall in September 2008. Whenever SACP criticized Mbeki directly, accusing his policies of creating a widening gulf between the rich and the poor, Mbeki made it clear that the alliance "was led by the ANC and by ANC policies." In 2005, when SACP threatened to break away from the alliance and contest the 2009 election on its own -- no longer as a partner with the ANC -- Mbeki lashed back and warned that the SACP "does not tell the ANC how to run the country." SACP does not have either the funding nor the organization to break away from the alliance in the near future. Some pundits say if SACP was to break from the Qfuture. Some pundits say if SACP was to break from the alliance, it would become as irrelevant as the Pan-African Congress or the Azanian People's Organization.

¶4. (SBU) Following the 2004 national election, the SACP seated about 80 members in the National Assembly under the ANC's banner. The mere fact that 80 of the ANC's parliamentary seats between 2004 and 2009 belonged to SACP members demonstrated the degree to which the SACP is deeply embedded within the ruling party and has the opportunity to impact both executive and legislative decisions. Even with the tension between Mbeki and SACP, the communist party had several leaders in the former President's Cabinet. Cabinet members from the SACP included Sydney Mufamadi, Charles Nqakula, and Rob Davies. Despite this inclusion, SACP had no members in the top six of the ANC's National Executive Committee (NEC). This changed in 2007 when SACP member Gwede Mantashe became the party's Secretary General. Mantashe and other SACP leaders played key roles in ensuring that Zuma would be elected as ANC leader at the party's congress in

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December 2007.

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SACP's Impact Under Zuma ... So Far  
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¶5. (SBU) Under the incoming Zuma administration, key SACP members are expected to be given Cabinet positions. SACP Secretary General Blade Nzimande, who rose through the communist party's ranks quickly even though he only joined in the late 1980s, is one of the most prominent members expected to receive an appointment. Such a job in Zuma's Cabinet would make him accountable, as a "deployed cadre," to the ANC. (Note: There are rumors that Nzimande may become the Minister of Education or the Deputy Minister of Education. End Note.) In recent months both SACP and COSATU already have exerted their influences over the South African Government. One example was the appointment of the Deputy Finance Minister. Originally, President Kgalema Motlanthe wanted to appoint NEC member Enoch Gongwana to the post, but Nzimande blocked this move within the NEC and offered Finance Portfolio Committee chair George Nene as the preferred candidate. Nene ultimately won the position. Another example is the recent appointment of the new Gauteng premier. ANC provincial leader -- who had been Gauteng premier -- Paul Mashatile was expected to be retained as the premier. However, the ANC replaced him with NEC member Nomvula Mokonyane. Mokonyane sits on the SACP's Central Committee. (Note: Mokoyane also was educated briefly at both the Harvard University Business School and the University of Pennsylvania's Business School, and has made some pro-West statements in recent months. End Note.) SACP is hoping that its influence grows, but it is still too soon to say how much Zuma will rely on the party as opposed to his allies in COSATU or the ANC's Youth League.

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Comment  
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16. (SBU) The SACP under a Zuma presidency now judges that it is positioned to increase its influence and power within the ANC. At the same time, members in the ANC, COSATU, and the ANC Youth League feel Zuma "owes" them as they view their support as pivotal for Zuma's elevation to the ANC presidency. ANC Youth League President Julius Malema stated publicly that the alliance partners "put Zuma into power" and if he does not do what they want they can "remove" him like they did to Mbeki in September 2008. It is likely that an increased number of SACP members will hold more senior positions in the Zuma administration. The question will be whether they will use that access and influence successfully to pursue SACP policy goals.

LA LIME